

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DHA-02 /059 W
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P R 011145Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 667
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 3138

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

REF: KARACHI 1521

SUMMARY: PNA PROCESSIONS CONTINUE DALY THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ANY MORE DIRECTLY
THREATENED THAN IT WAS BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONVENED
IT ALSO CANNOT CLAIM IT IS BRINGING THE SITUATION UNDER
CONTROL. THE PNA IS NOW FOLLOWING A TACTIC OF BRINGING
OUT AFFINITY GROUPS IN PROCESSION. WOMEN, LAWYERS
AND ULEMA HAVE MARCHED IN VARIOUS CITIES IN A TACTIC
REMINISCENT OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST AYUB IN 1968.

THE PUBLIC FOCUS OF THE CONFRONTATION IS SHIFTING
FROM KARACHI TO LAHORE. THE ULEMA PROCESSION ON MARCH
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31 IN THE PUNJAB CAPITAL WAS THE SHARPEST CONFRONTATION
BETWEEN THE PNA AND THE GOVERNMENT IN LAHORE SINCE THE
ELECTIONS. REPORTS OF THE NUMBERS ARRESTED OR KILLED
SINCE MARCH 7 VARY WIDELY. THE GOP CLAIMS ABOUT 6,000
OPPOSITIONISTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED WHILE THE PNA SAYS THE
FIGURE IS 24,000. GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION FIGURES ON THE
NUMBER KILLED CLUSTER AROUND 100, WITH THE GOVERNMENT

SOMEWHAT LOWER AND THE PNA CLAIMING 125.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS VOIDED THE ELECTION OF FORMER RAILWAYS MINISTER CHEEMA BECAUSE OF IRREGULARITIES AND MORE SUCH ACTIONS ARE EXPECTED. THE EC'S ACTIVITIES ARE TAKING A BACK-SEAT IN THE PUBLIC MIND HOWEVER TO THE GOP/PNA CONFRONTATION IN THE STREETS. MEDIA COVERAGE OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES IS GENERALLY BEING NEARLY BLACKED OUT IN THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA BUT WITH GOOD COVERAGE IN MUCH OF THE VERNACULAR PRESS AND THE NON-GOVERNMENT OWNED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. ANY HOPES THE PM MIGHT HAVE HAD THAT THE INTENSITY AND FREQUENCY OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD DECREASE AFTER THE CONVENING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON MARCH 26 HAVE NOT BEEN REALIZED. PNA PROCESSIONS ARE STILL HELD DAILY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER IN THE CITIES AND TOWNS OF THE PUNJAB. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ANY MORE DIRECTLY THREATENED THAN IT WAS BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPENED, NEITHER CAN IT CLAIM IT IS BRINGING THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.

. TACTICS - THE PNA HAS CHANGED SOME OF ITS CONFRONTATION TACTICS. FORMERLY, PNA PROCESSIONS WERE HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS MARCHING TOGETHER. NOW, THE OPPOSITION IS BRINGING OUT DISCRETE GROUPS OF PROCESSIONISTS IN A TACTIC REMINISCENT OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST AYUB IN 1968. IN KARACHI, WHEN THE SIND ASSEMBLY OPENED, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PNA SPONSORED MARCHES BY WOMEN AND LAWYERS. (SEE REFTEL.) ON MARCH 31 IN LAHORE THERE WAS AN ULEMA (RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND SCHOLARS) PROCESSION AND TODAY ANOTHER LAWYERS' PROCESSION IS SCHEDULED. IN RECENT DAYS, WOMEN'S PROCESSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN HYDERABAD, PINDI AND SMALLER CITIES IN THE FRONTIER, AS WELL AS IN LAHORE, WHERE SOME 2,500-3,000 MARCHED DOWN THE CITY'S PRINCIPAL THOROUGHFARE MARCH 30 IN AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW OF STRENGTH.

3. THE PNA REALIZES THAT AYUB'S DOWNFALL WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DAILY MARCHES BY VARIOUS AFFINITY GROUPS. IT PROBABLY HOPES TO ESTABLISH AN IDENTIFICATION IN THE PUBLIC MIND BETWEEN THEIR PRESENT PROCESSIONS AND THOSE OF NINE YEARS AGO. ALSO, THE PNA APPRECIATES THE PUBLICITY VALUE OF WOMEN'S PROCESSIONS AND UNDOUBTEDLY HOPES TO PROFIT FROM THE DIFFICULT AND EMBARRASSING POSITION IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT FINDS ITSELF WHEN IT ATTEMPTS FORCEFULLY TO STOP WOMEN'S MARCHES.

4. KARACHI AND LAHORE - THE PUBLIC FOCUS OF THE CONFRONTATION IS SHIFTING FROM KARACHI TO THE MORE POLITICALLY CRITICAL CITY OF LAHORE. EXCEPT FOR DISTURBANCES ON THE 30TH IN KARACHI, THE CITY HAS BECOME CALMER IN THE PAST WEEK WITH THE CURFEW BEING PROGRESSIVELY LIFTED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CITY. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS, HOWEVER THAT THE PNA SEEMS TO BE GIVING GREATER ATTENTION TO LAHORE. THE CONGEN NOTES THAT YESTERDAY'S PROCESSION OF ULEMA LED TO THE SHARPEST CONFRONTATION IN THE CITY SINCE THE ELECTION. ABOUT 300 ULEMA, WHILE MARCHING FROM THE OLD CITY, WERE MET BY THE POLICE WHO USED A HEAVY LATHI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 3138

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

CHARGE AND TEAR GAS TO BREAK UP THE MARCH. A NUMBER OF BYSTANDERS WERE CAUGHT IN THE ALTERCATION AND REPORTEDLY ABOUT 250 PEOPLE WERE INJURED WITH ABOUT 70 HOSPITALIZED. NAWA-I-WAQT REPORTS THAT ONE OF THOSE INJURED WAS IAN JACK, LONDON SUNDAY TIMES CORRESPONDENT. A PNA OFFICE IN LAHORE WAS BOMBED THIS WEEK, THE FIRST SUCH ATTACK WE KNOW OF ON AN ALLIANCE OFFICE. THE ARMY CONTINUES TO BIVOUAC IN LAHORE. WE ARE NOT CERTAIN WHETHER THE ARMY IS STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR INSURING LAW AND ORDER IN MULTAN AND KHANEWAL. IT WAS REPORTEDLY CALLED OUT IN A NEARBY

TOWN ON MARCH 30 AFTER A POLICE-PNA CLASH RESULTED IN TWO DEATHS.

5. ARRESTS AND CASUALTIES - REPORTS OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARRESTED OR KILLED SINCE THE POST-ELECTION DEMONSTRATIONS BEGAN VERY WIDELY, DEPEND ON THE SOURCE GIVING SUCH INFORMATION AND ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY.
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WE ARE WARY OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE NUMBERS GUESSING GAME, BUT BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT MAY BE INTERESTED IN SOME OF THE ESTIMATES BEING DISCUSSED HERE. THE GOP HAS TOLD SHARON ROSENHAUS OF THE LA TIMES, IN RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC QUERY, THAT APPROXIMATELY SIX THOUSAND OPPOSITIONISTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. PNA SOURCES PLACE THE FIGURE AROUND TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND. WE ASSUME THE REAL FIGURE IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN, BUT ARE UNABLE TO MAKE AN ACCURATE ESTIMATE. GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION FIGURES ON THE NUMBER OF DEATHS SINCE MARCH SEVENTH TEND TO CLUSTER AROUND THE FIGURE OF ONE HUNDRED; THE GOP FIGURE AGAIN SOMEWHAT LOWER WITH THE PNA ALLEGING 125.

6. SO FAR ONLY A HANDFUL OF THOSE JAILED HAVE BEEN HELD WITHOUT CHARGE AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE. A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER ARE HELD FOR VIOLATION OF DEFENSE OF PAKISTAN RULES (JUSTIFIED BY THE STATE OF EMERGENCY) AND FOR VARIOUS CRIMINAL CHARGES (E.G., AUTO THEFT). THE MAJORITY OF THOSE ARRESTED DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN CHARGED UNDER SECTION 144 OF THE CRIMINAL CODE WHICH GIVES LOCAL MAGISTRATES THE AUTHORITY TO PROHIBIT ANY ACT THEY CONSIDER DANGEROUS TO LOCAL PACE.

7. THE ELECTION COMMISSION CONTINUES ITS SLOW AND DELIBERATE REVIEW OF A NUMBER OF THE CONTESTED RESULTS OF BOTH NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. YESTERDAY, THE COMMISSION DECLARED THE ELECTION OF FORMER RAILWAYS MINISTER HAFEEZULLAH CHEEMA AS VOID AND ASKED HIM TO SHOW CAUSE WHY HE SHOULD NOT BE PROSECUTED. THE COMMISSION HAS ALSO ORDERED REPOLLING AT TWO POLLING STATIONS, ONE IN THE FRONTIER AND ANOTHER IN THE PUNJAB. ALTHOUGH OBSERVERS EXPECT THE EC TO DECLARE OTHER ELECTIONS VOID BECAUSE OF IRREGULARITIES, THE COMMISSION'S ACTIONS ARE TAKING A BACK-SEAT TO THE CONTINUING GOVERNMENT/PNA CONFRONTATION IN THE STREETS.

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8. MEDIA COVERAGE OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES REMAINS GENERALLY UNCHANGED. ALTHOUGH ALMOST BLACKED OUT IN THE PAKISTAN TIMES AND ON RADIO AND TELEVISION, THE OPPOSITION IS STILL GETTING GOOD COVERAGE IN MUCH OF THE VERNACULAR PRESS, MOST NOTABLY NAWA-I-WAQT AND JANG, AND ALSO IN SEVERAL ENGLISH PAPERS SUCH AS DAWN.
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